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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 KUWAIT 000316

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR AF CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL SCHWARTZ  
VISIT TO KUWAIT

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Classified By: Ambassador Deborah K. Jones for reasons 1.4 b and d

[1](#)1. (C) General Schwartz, my staff and I look forward to welcoming you to Kuwait. Your visit will provide an excellent opportunity to engage with senior Kuwait military leaders as the bilateral relationship adapts to our changing profile in Iraq and new challenges in Afghanistan/Pakistan. Your interlocutors will be keen to discuss how best to sustain robust security cooperation in this changing environment.

Kuwait Snapshot

[1](#)2. (C) Kuwait is a country that is small in area (about the size of New Jersey) and in population (approximately one million Kuwait citizens and two million expatriates), but its small size belies its economic weight, its strategic importance and, above all, its value as a welcoming platform for U.S. military and strategic engagement in this troubled region. Beneath Kuwait's sands lie the world's 5th largest reserves of oil, a resource that has served as a boon allowing Kuwait to fund extensive social services and a high standard of living for its population and provide aid to other Muslim states. Of course, the oil resource has also had an historic downside, serving as a lure that inspired Saddam Hussein to launch his 1990 invasion and, to this day, leaves Kuwaitis wondering what threats could emerge in the future. Nestled at the head of the Arabian Gulf between Iraq and Iran -- two large and periodically aggressive countries -- Kuwait has always relied on outside benefactors to safeguard its strategic location. The British filled this role for much of the 19th and 20th centuries, and we have filled it since 1971. In return, the U.S. has received unparalleled support for U.S. military and strategic engagement in Iraq and elsewhere in the region, a relationship that led us to designate Kuwait a major non-NATO ally in 2003.

A Vibrant But Adolescent Democracy

[1](#)3. (C) Kuwait is a vibrant but tempestuous young democracy -- topped by a fractious ruling family -- which is in the midst of a campaign to select new members for Parliament, with an election scheduled for May 16. The Amir dissolved the last Parliament on March 18 following repeated attempts by Members of Parliament to "grill" the Amir's hand-picked Prime Minister (also a member of the ruling family) on a variety of

charges. Overall, Kuwait is experiencing a period of drift owing to weak leadership emanating from the ruling family and the Government on one hand, and disruptive and sometimes irresponsible challenges from Members of Parliament, on the other. To a considerable degree, these difficulties reflect the political emergence of a growing class of "tribalist" Kuwaitis who are now challenging the grasp on power that Kuwait's mercantile class has traditionally enjoyed. Kuwait's present parliamentary troubles are, however, largely an internal matter and there is nothing in them to suggest a threat to the immediate future of the US/Kuwait bilateral relationship, which enjoys strong public support.

#### Massive Kuwaiti Support for OIF

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¶4. (C) While it has been argued that the U.S. and Kuwait have evolved into a "co-dependent" relationship under which Kuwait enjoys relative security and the U.S. gets an operations platform and logistical support, what the U.S. gets out of the relationship is undeniably large. In particular, Kuwait's contributions to Operation IRAQI FREEDOM have been massive and indispensable. Grateful for the U.S. role in freeing Kuwait from Iraq in 1991 (although this gratitude may be waning), Kuwait provides us with approximately USD one billion in benefits assessed annually that include waived port fees, waived ground support fees for military aircraft, cost-free use of bases, convoy escorts and security and customs waivers for imports and exports. Kuwait has also been supportive in allowing the transshipment through its territory of military equipment to Iraq. The USG-Kuwait

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military relationship is conducted within the framework of a Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) that was initially signed in 1991 and renewed in 2001 for a period of ten years. The DCA has the stated purpose of "strengthening the security and stability of the Gulf region."

#### Kuwait, the USG, and the Neighborhood

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¶5. (C) Kuwait's regional concerns focus on Iraq and Iran. While, in general, Kuwaitis are heartened by recent progress towards stabilizing Iraq, they worry that a premature U.S. departure could lead to resurgent instability in Iraq, with dangerous consequences for Kuwait and the wider region. Much of Kuwait's concern regarding Iraq centers on the large Shia population in southern Iraq and on Iranian influence there. Iran remains something of a 'bete noire' for the Kuwaitis, who believe the Shia Iranian regime is bent on expanding its influence throughout the Gulf region. Kuwaitis are also deeply worried about Iran's nuclear ambitions, but favor diplomatic engagement over force as the only viable option for alleviating this threat. As a small, relatively weak country, Kuwait looks to the U.S. as its ultimate protector, but also works energetically to expand its ties with Saudi Arabia and the GCC States, which it views as a Sunni-dominated counter-weight to expanding Iranian influence.

¶6. An important priority for the USG has been to promote the restoration of the Kuwait/Iraq bilateral relationship. Kuwait has taken several forward-leaning steps, including sending an Ambassador to Baghdad and setting aside funds to relocate a number of Iraqi families presently residing inside Kuwait. To Kuwait's chagrin, Iraq has dragged its feet on naming an ambassador to Kuwait and has been -- in GOK eyes -- intransigent on issues including debt repayments, border demarcation, and the recovery of the remains of Kuwaitis abducted during the Gulf War. Embassies Kuwait and Baghdad provided extensive support (mostly military logistics support and security) to help Kuwait's Ambassador establish his embassy.

¶7. (C) The GOK plays a generally positive role in support of Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts, including backing for the Palestine Authority and for the Quartet Principles, and has been an advocate of moderation in Arab League discussions. There remains, however, an underlying sense that the US favors Israel in its disputes with Arab countries and, in particular, with the Palestinians. The December 2008 Israeli incursion into Gaza caused a great deal of anguish here. Kuwait has contributed significant assistance to the Palestine Authority.

#### Shift of USG Focus to Afghanistan/Pakistan

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¶8. (C) While the GOK has misgivings about a 2011 U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, it appears to be generally understanding of a recent USG policy re-focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan. GOK leaders have told USG interlocutors that they view the presence of extremist elements on the Pakistan/Afghanistan border as a threat to the wider region. We believe they will be generally supportive of the President's new emphasis on an expanded effort in the Pakistan/Afghanistan area that combines diplomatic and civilian tools along with military ones, but would have misgivings about the indefinite use of Kuwait as a staging base for operations in that region. The GOK frequently urges USG interlocutors to place an increased emphasis on developing a dialogue with Iran as a means to advance regional stability and has urged us to work more closely with the Russians and Europeans to convince Iran to back away from its nuclear ambitions; the GOK has repeatedly emphasized its concerns over possible development of an Iranian nuclear program, but believes only dialogue and diplomacy can achieve these ends without putting the region at risk of a conflict.

#### Mil-to-Mil Relationship

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¶9. (C) The US/GOK military to military relationship is generally excellent, although there have been some recent fits and starts. While supportive of the US role in Iraq and

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prepared to support our withdrawal, members of the Kuwait military have said they do not want Kuwait to be utilized indefinitely as a platform for US military operations outside Kuwait; some have suggested that an optimal US post-Iraq presence could include a brigade dedicated to the defense of Kuwait. Kuwait Armed Forces Chief of Staff Lt. General Fahd Al-Amir (with whom we have requested a meeting for you) has, at times, demonstrated a prickly side toward the US presence, temporarily halting training at one site due to misplaced concerns over the presence of depleted uranium residue and mandating a temporary delay to construction at Ali Al-Salem Airbase. He has also, at times, demonstrated an interest in balancing US military purchases with French or other nations military capabilities. The COS has said his bottom line is that he favors a close relationship with the US, but such a relationship must be based on mutual interest. The relationship between the COS and the (acting) Minister of Defense has been tense at times. It should be noted that the Kuwait military gets relatively high marks for its professionalism (a recent parade and flyover related to National Day was an impressive display of Kuwait's military capabilities) and the US/Kuwait mil-to-mil relationship is characterized by dialogue and mutual respect.

#### Kuwait Air Force Background

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¶10. (C) Kuwait Air Force HQ is located at Al Mubarak Air Base, with the remaining forces stationed at the Air Defense Brigade, Ali Al Salem Air Base and Ahmed Al Jaber Air Base. The Kuwait Air Force numbers approximately 2,500 officers and enlisted personnel. The Kuwait Air Force was formed with

British assistance in early 1950s and was initially equipped with British aircraft (Hawker Hunter and BAC Lightning). In the 1970s, interceptor aircraft were supplied by France (Mirage F1) and ground attack aircraft by the U.S. (A-4 Skyhawks). In the 1980s, the need for training aircraft was filled by the Hawk and the Tucano. The delivery of the Tucano was delayed by the invasion of Kuwait in 1990. During the invasion, the Kuwait Air Force attempted to defend Kuwait before most of its aircraft were evacuated to Saudi Arabia. After the first Gulf War, the Kuwait Air Force was reorganized and the F-18 C/D Hornet replaced the Mirages and Skyhawks.

#### Foreign Military Sales Overview - USAF Cases

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¶11. (C) OMC-K currently works with SAF/IA and the Air Force Security Assistance Command (AFSAC) at Wright-Patterson AFB to coordinate on 15 active/implemented FMS cases valued at approximately \$163M. To put this effort into perspective, OMC-K manages 115 FMS cases valued in excess of \$8B. USAF FMS cases support the Kuwait Air Force with their legacy C-130/L-100s, provide USAF and contracted training through AFSAT at Randolph AFB, and provide technical support for the Kuwait AF AGM-65 Maverick missiles. A Letter of Offer and Acceptance for Shared Early Warning was signed in January ¶2009. A NSA COMSEC Letter of Offer and Acceptance was signed in January as well. These will provide Kuwait with a five year shared early warning capability commencing approximately February 2010.

The USAF is responsible for OMC-K's bi-annual support case, which provides assistance in kind services for our personnel, as well as funding for all the specific security assistance advisors who work directly within the Kuwait Armed Service. The current OMC-K Support Case funds 38 man years; 21 officers, 8 enlisted and 9 civilians over a period of 2 years. OMC-K has already received the request from the Kuwait Ministry of Defense for our next follow-on support Case, which we expect to be valued at \$27.996M for FY 2010 and ¶2011. It will fund 42 man years, 22 officers, 10 enlisted, and 10 civilians.

Two new FMS cases were presented to the Kuwait Ministry of Defense in January 2009 for their review/approval. These cases are designed to provide advanced weapons systems for their current fleet of F/A-18 C/D aircraft.

JDAM (KU-D-YAB) - 50 Tail Kits (Case Valued at \$7.2M)  
-- LOA forwarded to KMOD 22 JAN for review/approval; Offer Expired 18 FEB 09, then extended until 31 MAR 09.  
-- This case was signed on 31 March 2009.  
AMRAAM (KU-D-YAC) - 60 Missiles (Case Valued at \$69.3M)

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-- LOA forwarded to KMOD 27 JAN for review/approval; Offer Expires 10 APR 09.  
-- Status as of 23 MAR: With KMOD waiting funding from Ministry of Finance or review of Annual Budget to determine capability to fund.  
-- This requirement was highlighted to Commander AFCENT by the Kuwait Armed Forces Chief of Staff in 2008 as a high priority issue.  
-- Chief, OMC-K spoke with the Commander, Kuwait Air Force on 25 March who indicated that this capability was in fact a high priority and make appropriate phone calls to ensure required timelines were met.

The Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense has been briefed that if the AMRAAM cases are not signed by current expiration dates, AFSAC will not be able to automatically extend the offer date and the Offers will be withdrawn. Should Kuwait desire to pursue after the expiry date, it is estimated to take 3 months, at a minimum, to reoffer the case.

It is interesting to note that in October 2002, Kuwait was offered an LOA for 80 AMRAAM missiles, but this Offer expired with no action taken by Kuwait. The original offer expiration

date was 27 April 03; the offer expired and was extended 3 times until it finally expired on 20 September 2003 without another request for extension. Kuwait,s explanation for its decision was that their F/A-18s did not have the IFF MOD IV capability at that time, which is a requirement to use the missile. For reference, the IFF Mode IV upgrade was completed summer 2008 on all of Kuwait,s F/A-18 aircraft.

#### Other Significant FMS Efforts

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¶12. (C) On 4 September 2008, OMC-K received a request from Kuwait Ministry of Defense for a Letter of Offer and Acceptance for the purchase of six (6) KC-130J aircraft and associated support equipment, with an option for the purchase of two (2) additional aircraft. A pre LOA site survey was conducted at Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base during the week of 25-29 January 2009. A team from the US Navy conducted an inventory of the existing C 130/L 100 ground support equipment to determine what equipment can be reutilized in support of KC-130Js. In addition, several clarifications to the August 2008 Letter of Request (LOR) and Statement of Work were discussed with key Kuwait Air Force members. Since the completion of the pre-site survey, the PMA-207 program office has been working expeditiously to complete the development of the KC-130J LOA data, based on the official LOR that KMOD sent in August 2008, as well as the clarifications discussed during the pre-site survey. As LOA development continues to progress and moves through the various approval stages (NAVYIP approval, DSCA Case Writing Division, and Congressional Notification and Approval), we have assured the Ministry of Defense that we will keep them informed of the progress. We note that this purchase will require funding outside Kuwait,s normal annual FMS budget; therefore we expect them to submit a special budget funding request to the Ministry of Finance in support of the procurement. Objective is to provide LOA to Kuwait not later than the 15th of June 2009, but with all reviews required this will not be easily achieved.

In response to a Ministry of Defense request during August, Price & Availability (P&A) data was provided for the C-17 aircraft during October 2008. The total estimated cost for two (2) C-17 aircraft was \$1,179,614,645. The official response received was that the C-17 was not an operational requirement for the Kuwait Air Force and that a LOR would be not forthcoming. There is no current initiative to submit and LOR for C-17s.

#### Future Kuwait Air Force Aircraft

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¶13. (C) Chief, OMC-K was convoked by the Commander Kuwait Air Force 26 March in response to an offer by the Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force, the Honorable Bruce Lemkin, to provide a US Air Force team to present the capabilities of the F-16. Chief, OMC-K was directed to inform the US Air Force that there is no need to send a team to Kuwait as there are no plans to expand the Kuwait Air Force fighter fleet with a new aircraft. Commander Kuwait Air Force did indicate that the F35 is under consideration for procurement during 20152018 timeframe.

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¶14. (C) We have requested meetings with the following Kuwait MOD officials:

- LTG Fahed Al-Amir, Chief of Staff, Kuwait Armed Forces;
- MG Yousef Al-Otaibi, Commander, Kuwait Air Force;
- BG Khaled Al-Dae, Ali Al-Salem Base Commander

And have also scheduled meetings with the following USG military officials:

-- MG Charles Anderson, Deputy Commanding General, USARCENT  
-- BGen C.L. "Chuck" Hudson, Chief, Office of Military  
Cooperation-Kuwait  
-- Col Cameron Torrens, Commander, 386 Air Expeditionary Wing

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